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## The American Institute of Sacred Literature

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS OF BIBLE CLUBS USING THE OUTLINE COURSES

*Every month from October to June there will be presented in this department of the BIBLICAL WORLD suggestions to leaders of Bible Classes, desiring to use as a basis for class work either the outline Bible-study course on "THE LIFE OF CHRIST" prepared by ERNEST D. BURTON, or that on "THE FORESHADOWINGS OF THE CHRIST" by WILLIAM R. HARPER. Suggestions are prepared by GEORGIA LOUISE CHAMBERLIN, Secretary of the Reading and Library Department of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, who will be glad to consider any questions which club leaders may choose to address to the INSTITUTE.*

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#### THE LIFE OF CHRIST<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps there is no subject with which the average Christian is more familiar than the life of Christ. But this familiarity is frequently superficial. It has been gained chiefly by repeated contact with passages from the Gospels through the Sunday-school lessons or reading for devotional purposes. As a matter of fact few people possess even a reasonably *thorough* knowledge of the actual events in the life of Jesus. There are others who have gained a considerable degree of familiarity with the events of Jesus' life and of his teachings, but have no systematic view of his life as a whole, and no appreciation of the relationship of events to teachings. Still less have they the ability to estimate the point of view of the different gospels, or the necessity of an understanding of the times of Jesus. A very simple series of questions concerning matters of vital significance in the study of the life of Jesus would prove the truth of the above statement.

But more than knowledge is necessary to the Christian who holds Jesus as his example and his inspiration. Such a one must have a *sense* of Jesus, a feeling which amounts to more than knowledge, for the man

<sup>1</sup>The textbook for this course is *The Life of Christ*, by Ernest D. Burton, 50 cents, plus 4 cents postage. Address the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

and his principles, the views of his antagonists, and the great crises in his life as well as his manner of meeting them.

Moreover, the minister of today is dealing with groups of people who have been born into an age of questioning and inquiry. It is no longer possible to say to young people that they shall believe thus and so. They will believe, because if they are rightly directed they will see the truth and follow it for themselves, but such seeing is absolutely essential. Neither can we satisfy the present generation with the doctrine of salvation through the death of Jesus. Young people of today cry out for an inspiring life and teaching, and the example of a spirit exhibiting itself in daily service. This is an age in which leadership is demanded. If we would establish the leadership of Jesus we must teach people to know him as a hero, as a thinker, as a discoverer of new truth.

The course in connection with which suggestions to leaders will follow from month to month is a very simple one. It is based upon the arrangement of the life of Christ from the four gospels found in Stevens and Burton's *Harmony of the Gospels*. It seeks to present the life of Christ from the four gospels in chronological order, with such emphasis as shall bring to the student a true picture of Jesus, and the times in which he lived. The suggestions are prepared on the supposition that the class will meet at least twice each month. If a weekly meeting is more desirable the programs may easily be divided. Topics for reports and discussions are such as can be prepared on the basis of the biblical text itself. Many classes, however, will desire to make use of books, and from the library references given to the leader selections may be made which will be sufficiently simple for members of the class to use. It will doubtless be possible in every case to get these books put into the public library of the town. Such libraries are taking an active interest at the present time in recruiting their shelves with standard books on religious themes.

It is needless to say that in the study of the life of Jesus map work should be constantly carried on. It is a field in which the contributions of art also are many and of great value. It would be well for every club to have a special art committee which will provide pictures appropriate to each program. If the members of the class can also secure the *Harmony of the Gospels* alluded to above, the work of daily reading will be greatly simplified. A harmony may be constructed by cutting from Testaments the selections in the order in which they are given, and pasting them into blankbooks in columns, as in a regular harmony. Such a book constructed by each member of the class and illustrated with

pictures would not only interest in the making, but would result in a number of copies of an illustrated life of Jesus which might be sent to hospitals, prisons, or other places where they would be most welcome.

### *Program I*

*Leader:* (1) A brief statement concerning the sources of our information about Jesus. (2) The family life and methods and material of education among the Jewish people.

*Members of the class:* (1) A comparison of the Gospels, discussing the point at which each takes up the story of the life of Jesus. (2) The boyhood training of Jesus, and his conception of God as indicated in his intercourse with the learned men in the temple at twelve years of age. (3) The thirty years in Nazareth, based upon facts stated in the Bible, with additions supplied by a historical imagination.

*Subject for discussion.*—If we can imagine Jesus as a boy in Nazareth, shall we find him different from other children, in his method of acquiring knowledge, his enjoyment of pastimes, his performance of daily tasks, his interest in passing events? Wherein shall we look for a difference between him and other children in Nazareth?

### *Program II*

*Leader:* Political conditions in the country of Jesus, and the history and content of the messianic hope.

*Members of the class:* (1) The message of John the Baptist to his times. (2) The baptism of Jesus and his decision in the wilderness sojourn. (3) The first disciples of Jesus and the influences which drew them to him. (4) The wedding at Cana, as an illustration of Jesus in the social world of his day.

*Subject for discussion.*—Was the asceticism of John the Baptist more religious than the social attitude of Jesus?

#### REFERENCE READING

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. I, pp. 111-363; Mathews, *History of New Testament Times in Palestine*, full volume; Seidel, *In the Time of Jesus*, full volume; Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*; McCoun, *The Holy Land in Geography and History*; Holtzmann, *The Life of Jesus*, chaps. iv-vii; Sanday, *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, pp. 1-47; Gilbert, *The Student's Life of Jesus*, pp. 79-135; Stalker, *Life of Christ*, chaps. i, ii, iii; Rhees, *The Life of Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 45-97; Farrar, *Life of Christ*, chaps. i-xi; Dawson, *Life of Christ*, pp. 7-56; Burton and Mathews, *Life of Christ*, pp. 9-66; Burton, *A Short Introduction to the Gospels*, full volume; Burgess, *Life of Christ*, pp. 15-79.

In the Hastings *Bible Dictionary*, four-volume edition, and in the two-volume *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, will be found articles of value on every subject touched upon in the study.

A good map for class use is edited by Professor George Adam Smith, and published by the Westminster Publishing Company.

Messrs. Underwood & Underwood of New York City have prepared a most interesting series of stereographic pictures, illustrating the land of Palestine, and the customs of its people. The following companies furnish prints of masterpieces of art, both new and old, catalogues of which can be secured without difficulty: The Perry Picture Company, Boston, Mass.; The Brown Picture Company, Malden, Mass.; The University Prints, Boston, Mass.; W. A. Wilde & Co., Chicago. The famous Tissot Pictures have been reproduced in color and may be secured from the Tissot Picture Society, 27 East 22d St., New York City.

Notable contributions to this subject from fiction are *Ben Hur*, by General Lew Wallace, and *The Story of the Other Wise Man*, by Van Dyke.

#### THE FORESHADOWINGS OF THE CHRIST<sup>1</sup>

A few years ago one of the points of attention upon which biblical scholarship centered was what is termed messianic prophecy. For centuries the conception of the prophet had been largely that of a predictor. With the application of the now prevalent historical method of study to the Old Testament, a new conception of the prophet's work appeared. Still, in many cases, predicting future events, it was seen that the basis of these predictions was most frequently the political and religious situation of the speaker's own times, and his wonderful ability to interpret the past history of his people. The prophetic gift, moreover, found its source in the prophet's new and deeper realization of the character of God. The prophets were the advocates of a theocracy. To them religion and politics were one, and we see the prophet not only concerned with religion but equally with political and social matters.

Historical study has not, however, changed the dominating nature of the personality of Jesus in relation to biblical literature. People are still asking, "Did the prophets speak of Jesus; if so, where, when, and how?" But those who have followed the work of the prophets, by the aid of modern literature concerning them, frame the question differently. They would say, "What is there in the work and teaching of the prophets which *foreshadows* the work and teaching of Jesus?" That is, was there a path along which the hope of Israel traveled, between ever-broadening

<sup>1</sup>The textbook for this course is *The Foreshadowings of the Christ*, by William Rainey Harper, 50 cents, plus 4 cents postage. Address the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

boundaries, toward the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and what relation has the kingdom of God in the conception of Jesus, to the old messianic kingdom, which represented the dream of the Hebrews throughout their history?

A number of years ago President William Rainey Harper prepared a course on "The Foreshadowings of the Christ," in which he carried the students through the developing phases of the messianic element in the Old Testament, showing the growth of wonderful ethical and religious conceptions, contributing to the life and literature of the Hebrew. This course was pursued by several thousand people, and since that time has been more or less freely used. Many of those who have studied the course, however, were ministers and people who had already considerable knowledge of the Bible. There is, among the mass of the people, a great curiosity in regard to this question of prediction concerning Jesus. Such curiosity is justifiable, and should be wisely met, by leading students out into the larger conception of the prophets' work, and an appreciation of the foundations which their ideals laid for Jesus' work in establishing the kingdom of God on earth.

The chief difficulty of the leader of a class in this subject will be to keep to the subject. The work of the prophets was so all-embracing that in teaching there is a constant temptation to branch out in various directions, and so to lose sight of the main issue. Since the literature on this subject is largely somewhat technical, and since the members of a class will have little familiarity with the contents of the Bible which relate to this topic, the subjects of reports and discussions at the meetings will be such as can be prepared through the study of the Bible itself from the daily readings. A single topic assigned to the leader at each meeting will help to give a background and introduction.

The study of the subject will be greatly assisted by the preparation of maps at different stages of progress. A map of the ancient world, showing the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea with the northern portion of Egypt, and the Asiatic region of the northeast, which includes Babylonia, Assyria, and the allied countries, is of first importance. The Arabian peninsula should also be included. Programs for two meetings each month are provided, the supposition being that if four meetings are desired these programs can be divided.

#### *Program I*

*Leader:* (1) The world stories of all peoples, and the ethical idealism of the prophets, represented in their treatment of the world stories of the Hebrews. (2) The life of eastern nomadic peoples.

*Members of the class:* (1) The Hebrew world-stories retold. (2) Abraham the immigrant and idealist. (3) An estimate of the life of Jacob judged by the standards of his own times. (4) The contribution of the stories of Genesis to the fundamental principles of a religious life.

*Subject for discussion.*—If the prophets retold the traditions of their people in order to convey through them religious teaching, does the value of these stories today lie in their relation to science and history, or to religious truth?

### *Program II*

*Leader:* The civilization of Egypt.

*Members of the class:* (1) Moses as a leader of his people: (a) His preparation, (b) The exodus and life with the Hebrews in the Wilderness. (2) The religious ideals of Moses as represented in the first, second, fourth, and fifth commandments. (3) The social ideals of Moses as represented in the third, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments. (4) The reading of the Song of the Exodus, chap. 15. (5) Elements in the period of Moses which entered into the messianic idea.

*Topic for discussion.*—In what respect does the tenth commandment present the highest ethical ideal of the Hebrew people up to the time of Moses?

### REFERENCE READING

Batten, *The Hebrew Prophet*, chaps. i and ii; Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, chaps. i-iv; Woods, *The Hope of Israel*, pp. 9-82; Goodspeed, *Israel's Messianic Hope*, pp. 1-46; Cornill, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 1-26; W. Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 1-46; Orelli, *Old Testament Prophecy*, pp. 1-134; George Adam Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. I, chap. ii; Harper, *The Prophetic Element in the Old Testament*, pp. 1-36; Chamberlin, *The Hebrew Prophets*, pp. 45-63; Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, pp. 1-74; Mitchell, *The World before Abraham*, entire volume; Lenormant, *The Beginnings of History*, entire volume; *The Biblical World*, articles by William Rainey Harper, "The Human Element in the Early Stories of Genesis," Vol. III, pp. 6 ff., 97 ff., 176 ff., 264 ff., Vol. IV, pp. 20 ff., 114 ff., 266 ff., "The Divine Element in the Early Stories of Genesis," Vol. IV, pp. 349 ff.; also Vol. VI, pp. 401 ff., article on "The Foreshadowings of the Christ," by the same author.

It is well to consult the *Hastings Bible Dictionary* as fully as possible. Specific mention of articles will not always be made, but the leader of a class will do well to look up each topic which might be explored further through this valuable dictionary.